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UNIVERSITY EDUCATION



Debt relief: Premier Oscar Mabuyane on Tuesday announced a plan to tackle student debt. /File

Premier's office allocates R70m to pay off student debt

Ntsikelelo Qoyo

The Eastern Cape premier's office will facilitate the payment of R70m to settle debts at three universities in the province, benefiting more than 2,000 students.

Premier Oscar Mabuyane announced this on Tuesday when he made his office's budget and policy speech for the 2025/26 financial year at the Bhisho legislature.

A 2023 Universities SA (USAF) assessment showed that about R21.7bn was owed to universities. The R70m will settle debt at Rhodes University, Walter Sisulu University and Nelson Mandela University.

Announcing the 2025/2026 annual performance plan, Mabuyane said that the top target for his office was growing an inclusive economy.

"In 2025/2026, the office will stimulate skills development for the economy through facilitation

of the provincial skills master plan, which includes internships, learnerships, bursaries, apprenticeships and work-related learning initiatives," he said.

"This requires the revitalised co-ordination of the multisectoral skills platform, which is the Eastern Cape Human Resources Development Council.

"Furthermore, the office will strive to improve the co-ordination of the Expanded Public Works Programme," he said.

Through the department of education, the province would invest R567m to implement employment initiatives that would benefit 28,000 unemployed youth, said Mabuyane.

He said the labour activation programme launched by the department of employment & labour, with an investment value of R906m, would benefit 23,000 people in the province, including unemployed graduates. /The Herald